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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000182

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NSC FOR MGAVIN, LETIM
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM KDEM SU
SUBJECT: ELECTIONS UPDATE: NCP CONCLUDES NOMINATIONS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On January 27, the official nomination period for Sudan's April 2010 national elections concluded with a mostly full slate of National Congress Party (NCP) nominees in all twenty five states of the country. Despite this, the NCP chose not to nominate a candidate for the president of the Government of Southern Sudan. President Bashir was nominated for President of the Republic. Some governorship races were very contentious and drew party criticism, which led to new nominees being selected. The NCP seems assured of its success though they fear losses at local levels and in tribal areas where local tribal nominees, regardless of party, will likely fare better than outside candidates. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The nomination period for the NCP went smoothly according to Ibrahim Ghandour, NCP Political Secretariat chief and influential NCP heavy weight, during a January 28 poloff meeting. While Ghandour acknowledged some NCP state committees seemed frustrated by the process and rejected some governor candidates, his overall attitude toward the election was decidedly positive and confident.

BASHIR NOMINATED FOR PRESIDENT

¶3. (SBU) In a unanimous vote, the NCP "Shurra" (Leadership) council nominated President Omer Al Bashir for the Presidency. In accordance with the Political Parties Law, Bashir stepped down from his post as Commander in Chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), although even the Ministry of Defense noted that his resignation from the military would be temporary until his likely election in April, 2010. Bashir has actively been campaigning since well before his nomination as posters, bumper stickers and bill boards all call for supporting this "national hero".

NO NCP NOMINEE FOR GOSS PRESIDENCY

¶4. (SBU) On January 27, the NCP announced that the party would support Salva Kiir for President of Southern Sudan. While some were surprised, the NCP's presidential adviser Ali Tamim Fartak

said that the move was to "maintain a good partnership" in the CPA. Ghandour stated that the NCP knew they wouldn't win the race for the GOSS presidency. In addition, Ghandour added that the NCP wanted to send a positive signal that they are for continued CPA implementation, and don't want to complicate matters by appearing to "manipulate" the South. Still other opposition parties counter that Lam Akol, former Government of National Unity (GNU) foreign minister and former member of the SPLM, is the "real" NCP nominee for the GOSS presidency as they accuse his new splinter party, the SPLM-DC, of being allied with the NCP.

GOVERNORS REMOVED, NOMINEES CHANGED

¶ 15. (SBU) During the week of January 17, 2010, President Omar Al-Bashir issued a presidential decree relieving the governors of North Kordofan, South Darfur, River Nile, Kassala, White Nile, Northern and El-Gadaref states. All NCP nominees in these states are different from the current governors. President Bashir did not relieve current NCP governors who were nominated to run for their position including the governors of Khartoum, Gezira, Sennar, Red

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Sea, South Kordofan and North Darfur states. Due to contention within the parties regarding the nominations, the NCP sent out seven delegations to the contested states. Salah Gosh, former director of the National Intelligence and Security Service, headed a delegation to Kassala State. In addition the NCP sent Ahmed Ibrahim El-Tahir, Speaker of the National Assembly, and Ibrahim Ghandour to various states to resolve differences with the NCP state-level committees. In the end, the NCP changed gubernatorial nominations in two states, North Kordofan and Blue Nile States. State-level committees were reportedly concerned about the electability of candidates originally nominated. The committees disagreed with Khartoum's decision to bring in outside nominees, and argued that to guarantee maximum support, local nominees were needed. Ghandour stated that the NCP was particularly careful to take local sensitivities into account when selecting candidates for Darfur.

GHANDOUR: NCP WILL CARRY THE DAY

¶ 16. (SBU) According to Ghandour, no one party is likely to win a landslide victory in the elections. He believes that the NCP will come in second in the south. Ghandour went on to state that the NCP is focusing on the most challenging races in Khartoum, Darfur, and Blue Nile states. The NCP is relying on women and youth to campaign for the party. While Ghandour conceded that the NCP might face difficulty in some races, he noted that Yasir Arman is the only serious candidate to contest against Bashir, though he insisted that Bashir would win easily.

¶ 17. (SBU) COMMENT: The NCP has long been preparing for elections, and the nomination period was well planned for through NCP's sophisticated state networks and party apparatus. Disagreement at the state-level is evidence of divisions between NCP state-level committees and the national NCP leadership. It is uncommon for senior NCP officials to be dispatched to the state-level to resolve issues. While it is too early to gauge the implications of the

latter, it is clear that disagreements within the party may play out further as the campaigning period progresses. Unlike many Sudanese political parties that saw a rise of independent candidates due to dissatisfaction with the nomination process, the NCP has remained fairly united and no independent candidates were announced. END COMMENT.

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